

# EXHIBIT C

**Monday, December 18, 2023**

Listen to the Report

## Redistricting: Szetela Files Paperwork To Have Eid Removed

A member of the [Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission](#) on Friday accused a colleague of misconduct — alleging he drew districts to help his acquaintances gain elected office — an allegation the commissioner vehemently denied.

The matter is just another instance of drama between commissioners since their mapmaking work was completed in late 2021, with Commissioner Rebecca Szetela again accusing Commissioner Anthony Eid of using his position on the commission for either personal or political gain.

Szetela on Friday filed a [notice](#) to have Eid removed from his post and his seat declared vacant. Eid's removal would ultimately be a commission decision, requiring 10 commissioners to vote for his removal at an upcoming meeting.

At present, Szetela only has the support of Commissioner Rhoda Lange, a frequent critic of the commission's work and practices, and potentially Commissioner Erin Wagner, who has been Lange's ally when she's lodged complaints in the past.

Eid, in an interview with Gongwer News Service, denied the allegations and pointed to Szetela causing disruptions in the commissioners' work by going after her colleagues and ICRC administrative staff, including its attorneys, when they disagreed with her.

Szetela, in response, told Gongwer that it wasn't personal, and that as attorney by trade, she was "a rules follower" who wanted to ensure public trust in what was by all accounts a messy process.

Szetela's filing states that she believes Eid abused his position to draw House District 20 in favor of Democrats, knowing that a Bloomfield-area activist, current [Rep. Noah Arbit](#), would be running for office. Szetela

also stated she believed Eid made House District 15 favorable for a college acquaintance, Bilal Hammoud, who unsuccessfully ran in the 2022 Democratic primary but lost to current 15th District [Rep. Erin Byrnes](#).

Like Eid, Arbit denied having known the commissioner prior to his work on the ICRC and first met Eid at a public hearing to gain input on potential mapping decisions.

A copy of the filing was provided to Gongwer News Service, but it will be made publicly available when the commission sets its next meeting date. A Department of State spokesperson said a copy of the notice will be attached in upcoming meeting materials.

The existence of the document was first reported by The Detroit News.

Szetela claims that Eid described himself as "friends" with Arbit. She claims to have observed Eid spending a significant amount of time talking to Arbit at a June 2021 meeting. Arbit submitted a community map on July 18, 2021, and later announced his House candidacy August 27, 2021.

The commissioner wrote Eid became "intently focused on redrawing the House and Senate districts that included West Bloomfield and Orchard Lake" and began "advocating for changes to the already-drawn House and Senate districts that contained West Bloomfield and Orchard Lake — the very areas identified by Arbit in his draft map."

Szetela further claimed Eid privately contacted commissioners and consultants outside of public meetings and suggested revisions affecting West Bloomfield, Orchard Lake, Sylvan Lake and Keego Harbor. Eid resides in Orchard Lake.

Various text messages between Szetela and Eid were highlighted in the notice filed with the Department of State.

Eid attended what Arbit called a fundraiser for his campaign in 2022, with the two posing for a picture posted to Arbit's Instagram account, but Eid said it was actually a townhall and he attended a similar one for a Republican candidate, who is Chaldean like Eid and a member of his church.

The 15th District allegations read along the same lines, accusing Eid of actively making the district safely Democratic to assist Hammoud, who

attended Wayne State University at the same time as Eid. The two were noted to be members of the Student Senate together.

Szetela wrote that, as with Arbit, Eid previously described Hammoud as his "friend" in discussions with MICRC commissioners, staff and consultants. She claims Eid was also witnessed speaking to Hammoud at length at MICRC events.

"In what can be charitably described as a curious twist of fate," Szetela wrote, "Hammoud also happened to work on the implementation of Proposal 2 as an employee of the Michigan Department of State, as is evident from the banner picture on his LinkedIn page (displaying him at a Department of State event discussing the MICRC)."

Szetela and Lange posited Eid used his position to benefit them, even though Hammoud handily lost the district. Still, they said the Arbit connection was cause to remove him from his post.

"When a member of the MICRC prioritizes personal relationships with friends who are politicians or candidates for office in making map-drawing decisions, it results in political power being taken from the people and placed into the hands of a select few – who can manipulate the maps to their benefit," Szetela wrote in the filing. "These types of back-room dealings were the very type of transactions that Michigan voters had sought to prevent by implementing Proposal 2. ... Eid has fallen well short of these standards."

A U.S. district judge overseeing *Agee v. Benson*, a lawsuit alleging the commission made race a predominant factor in building districts in violation of the U.S. Voting Rights Act, could very well nullify key districts and soon call the group back to the drawing board. Szetela has all but sided with the plaintiffs in their belief the commission violated Section 2 of the VRA.

In an interview with Gongwer, Szetela said she was concerned Eid could influence the maps if they are called back, and she filed the complaint to limit his access to any new maps.

"Frankly, there's more than just these two cases. There's been multiple complaints that have come into the commission about side discussions and districts being drawn favorably to Democratic candidates. But we weren't aware of that until after the maps were approved," Szetela said. "Now, we're aware of that as commissioners, and there's a potential that we could have to draw maps again. And if that happens, there's a pretty

strong contingent of commissioners who frankly feel that (Eid) should never touch one of our maps again."

It would take 10 commissioners to vote in favor of removing Eid. Szetela said it was hard to tell if she had the votes.

"There's a general consensus that Commissioner Eid is not honest among commissioners, whether they're going to be willing to remove him or not remains to be seen. If they aren't willing to remove him, I think there's other things and steps that we can take to limit his ability to impact maps, such as not allowing him to draw on collaborative maps, or maybe just redrawing anything that he does if he has a turn," she said. "There are other things we can do. This is kind of the first step and if we don't achieve what Commissioner Lange and I are asking for, there are other ... things coming to kind of protect the public from this sort of malfeasance."

Eid called the allegations preposterous, and another example of Szetela sowing chaos as a commissioner. He was confident that Szetela didn't have the votes to remove him and that most commissioners would stand by him if a vote occurred.

"Rebecca has been throwing my name in the dirt for quite some time now," Eid said. "I'm not very concerned. I think that anyone who's been paying attention to the process can see through these veiled accusations. It's not only that she's come after me. It seems like she has come after every person that disagrees with her. She came after our old general counsel, that led to her resigning. She has come after other commissioners. It just seems like there's a pattern ... and I find it very interesting this happening now after she accused our lawyers of having a conflict of interest."

**SZETELA AT THE FOREFRONT OF SEVERAL DISPUTES:** In the past year, Szetela has questioned Eid's fitness for his post and was instrumental in raising conflict of interest concerns against him when he obtained a job with social justice nonprofit. Eid eventually resigned from his job with Michigan Voices, which was involved in public comment that had an impact on end-game map changes.

It was the second time Eid accepted employment, but then quickly resigned from a group involved in the making of district maps. In 2022, Eid took a job with Asian and Pacific Islander American Vote at the same time the group was involved in a lawsuit against the commission. The group, sometimes called APIA, also requested the commission to "keep

the Bengali community together" during the map-making process. Eid left the APIA after two weeks.

Szetela's complaint led to an investigation, but commissioners in charge of the inquiry said no violations occurred.

During the final throes of the mapmaking process, former General Counsel Julianne Pastula abruptly resigned following a public dispute over legal advice that Szetela raised. While Pastula did not say why she was resigning, their dispute was front and center for the public to see. Pastula now works for the city of Detroit.

More recently, Szetela questioned the ability of commissioners Doug Clark and Dustin Witjes to serve since they are no longer residing in Michigan. Clark is seeking cancer treatment out of state but said he still has a residence in Michigan. Witjes moved to Illinois for work.

As the group was gearing up for the November bench trial in *Agee*, Szetela confronted the ICRC with a proposal to allow the body, which is funded by taxpayer resources, to pay for individual legal representation outside of the firms hired to defend the commission and its maps in court. She was concerned the body's litigation attorneys were misrepresenting her in appearances in filings.

Testimony from Szetela and a dissent she filed after the maps were adopted would later become evidence used by the *Agee* plaintiffs at trial.

"She said it under oath that she went on her own volition and reached out to plaintiffs to ... provide them with information to help their case, essentially to undermine the commission," Eid said.

Eid said he felt this was an act of sabotage on Szetela's part.

Eid further argued that aside from not being friends with either Arbit or Hammoud, Orchard Lake and its adjacent West Bloomfield was his home, and that he had a deep interest in listening to public comment from that area.

"It's a Middle Eastern community of interest. So, she's right, I did take special interest in those two districts, but it wasn't to help one person or another. It's because I'm a part of those communities, and it's because I wanted to listen to the public comments in those two communities," Eid said. "From folks who, at least in West Bloomfield, have had a history of being systemically gerrymandered for political gain, and in Dearborn

and Dearborn Heights, the Middle Eastern community, who to this day, doesn't have a checkbox on the census. The population is a VRA protected group. I just wanted to make sure that the people in that community had their say, at having the chance to have representation. The public comments for both of those configurations were vast. They're some of the highest public comment that we had."

Szetela has long said the commission didn't do enough to listen to public commentary that would have maybe helped them draw better maps. Although Eid said he was doing that, Szetela said there was a key difference: the potential relationship he had with Arbit and Hammoud.

"I want to make it very clear, I am not saying Arbit or Hammoud told Eid to go draw districts for them. I don't know if that happened or not. However, Anthony has an obligation as a commissioner to make sure he's not drawing districts to favor a candidate running for office," she said. "It's perfectly fair for Arbit to submit a map. It's perfectly fair for Hammoud to submit a map. What's not OK is for Anthony to then take that map, knowing that they're running for office or knowing that they're planning on running for office, inserting into the commission maps and not make any mention of it to the commissioners."

In an interview, Arbit told Gongwer that Szetela's accusations were "patently absurd."

"It's the height of lunacy, frankly," referencing a tweet from a Gongwer reporter in 2021 showing that Eid was not the only one to help create the district in which he ran in and won. "I know that the commission is having a lot of inner turmoil, and it seems this is sort of another symptom of that — where they're kind of sniping at each other and going at each other's throats."

Arbit argued that greater West Bloomfield was an area where Republicans, who were in control of the 2010 mapmaking process, "took a butcher's knife to Lisa Brown's district to gerrymander her out of office, to divide her base of support, which was the Jewish community, to create a basically two red districts out of a blue leaning seat in West Bloomfield."

West Bloomfield is one of the only communities in the entire state of Michigan that we could find that was gerrymandered and divided in the 2010 map, Arbit said.

"That is also something that was recognized by the community, which is why I was far from the only person to speak before the redistricting

commission to talk about greater West Bloomfield being kept together," Arbit said. "There were literally probably 50 or so people, you can go on the portal, you can look, I mean, there are just so many comments about it."

Arbit denied knowing Eid personally, having only met him during the redistricting process, and that he had not decided to run for office well after he spoke to Eid and before the maps were finalized in late December 2021.

ICRC Executive Director Edward Woods III, in a statement, said the commission will review Szetela's and Lange's allegations "and render a finding in compliance with the Michigan Constitution and its Rules of Procedure."

Szetela said she didn't believe her recent allegations against commission members had worn their patience thin or made them unwilling to work with her.

"I think at the end of the day, they respect my opinion, and we might ultimately disagree and they might ultimately say, 'No, we're not going to vote to remove Mr. Eid,' but they respect the fact that I'm raising it," Szetela said. "There's no bias here. There's no politics. It's about we are stewards of the public; we have an obligation to follow the law. And to the extent I see it's not being followed, I'm going to raise that up and bring it to the attention of the public because I think it's my obligation to do that."

— By Ben Solis

[Back to top](#)

